

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Sunday of Divine Mercy | For Sunday, April 19, 2020

Despite the Locked Doors

Written by Douglas Sousa, S.T.L.

Acts 2:42-47

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31



As we age, we come to expect letdowns and disappointments. Because of so many unfulfilled promises and unmet expectations, we become cynical of anything that can seem too good to be true. Our hearts grow calloused to protect us from future disillusionment. And so, we come to demand proof and assurances before committing ourselves to anything.

Such is the case with Thomas and the other apostles in today's gospel. They had set all their hope on Jesus. And it all came to a horrifying and humiliating end with the crucifixion. Now, they were reduced to hiding behind a locked door for fear that the authorities would do to them what they had done to Jesus.

While they were cowering in fear, Jesus appeared to them. John tells us that Jesus shows himself to them, "despite the locked doors." John is not just referring here to the heavy wooden doors of their hiding place. He is talking about the closed doors of their hearts. Jesus doesn't wait until they calm down or get perspective on the situation. Rather, he breaks through the door of their fear announcing the good news that he is alive.

Just as Jesus is not shut out by the closed doors of the apostles' fear, neither is he shut out by the closed door of Thomas' doubt. Instead, taking up Thomas' challenge, Jesus appears to him so that he can put his doubt aside. The nail marks on his hands, feet, and side dispel any doubt that this is truly the risen Jesus standing before him.

All of us have times when we approach God with a closed heart. We might fear that He will take from us more than we're willing to give. Or, we might fear that we'll be made fun of if we live His message in a total and radical way. Our hearts may also be hardened by doubt. With so many different religions and so many different opinions, we might wonder, who's to say which is the right way?

No matter where we are with our faith — no matter how closed our hearts may seem — Jesus can break through that closed door and reveal himself. If you can only go so far, Jesus can meet you there. If you can only believe so much, Jesus can take your hand and lead you a little further along. There is no doubt, fear, or weakness that Jesus, through the power of his resurrection and the power of his Holy Spirit, cannot surmount.

Thomas is an example for us here. He is famous for his doubt — but his story doesn't end there. Tradition tells us that he went on to preach the Gospel in India. He is often pictured with a spear, because he was run through with a spear and killed. Doubting Thomas was martyred for his witness to the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus

broke through the closed door of Thomas' doubt and filled him with the faith which enabled him to eventually give his life for Jesus.

The same is true for us. On Divine Mercy Sunday, Jesus wants nothing more than to reveal himself to us, dispel our doubts, and lead us to freedom and peace.

Douglas Sousa, S.T.L.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Thomas, the Apostle

O Glorious Saint Thomas,
your grief for Jesus was such
that it would not let you believe he
had risen unless you actually saw him
and touched his wounds.
But your love for Jesus was equally great
and it led you to give up your life for him.

Pray for us that we may grieve for our sins
which were the cause of Christ's sufferings.
Help us to spend ourselves in his service
and so earn the title of "blessed"
which Jesus applied to those who
would believe in him
without seeing him.
Amen.